



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: MFWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, June 21 – June 27, 2008

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2007 annual report) can be found at:
<http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

FWP welcomes volunteer Blakeley Adkins. She recently completed her Bachelor's degree in wildlife and will helping with field work in western MT this summer.

Bradley conducted monitoring flights on June 13, 17. and the 26th in western Montana. Asher and Ross also conducted flights in southwest Montana on the 24th.

On the 26th, Bradley caught and collared an adult black male in French Basin. This new pack will be called Cameron Creek. Assisting with the trapping and processing efforts were Blakeley Adkins, Lindsey Rich (University of Montana), and US Forest seasonal employees Scott Eggeman and Andrea Shortsleeve.

Bradley, Smucker and volunteers will continue trapping and scouting efforts at the south end of the Bitterroot Valley for the Divide Creek, Sula, and Painted Rocks packs.

Asher wrapped up scouting efforts and field work in the Absaroka – Beartooth face foothills west of Red Lodge. She visited with many landowners. All is quiet and not much for wolf sign was found. She then shifted efforts to the Paradise Valley for the rest of the week.

Laudon and Brent Lonner (FWP Wildlife Biologist in Fairfield) have been working in the North Fork of the Sun River on the Red Shale pack. They have been scouting areas of previous public and agency wolf reports and have been trapping. No captures through the 27th but they did confirm the pack still exists in the drainage.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On the 27th, WS killed 3 members of the Elevation Mountain pack (1 male and 2 non-breeding females) near Helmville, completing control efforts after several calves were confirmed killed on private land.

On the 27th, control efforts to remove the Battlefield pack concluded – no wolves were killed and no further livestock losses were reported since May 13.

Outreach and Education Activities

Nothing to report.

Research Activities

The Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Montana, in collaboration with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Nez Perce Tribe, and Idaho Fish and Game are researching alternatives to current wolf population monitoring techniques. Wolf population monitoring in the northern Rockies has relied on visual observations of packs – an approach effective for a small, recovering population. However, as the population increased and distribution expanded, additional and valid techniques are still needed. Many of the traditional sampling methods used to monitor wolves such as scat surveys, track surveys, scent stations, and aerial counts are difficult to conduct on a state-wide scale due to the man-hours required, cost, weather, limited accessibility, and remote terrain. In Idaho, research efforts have been underway for nearly 2 years (led by David Ausband) and have been focused on application of howl boxes to detect and count wolves on a sound recording (digital picture of sound waves of howling wolf/ves), prediction of the location and visitation to rendezvous sites to collect DNA samples, and use of hunter reports. The research requires a reliable, more accurate estimate of wolf pack territory sizes for development of a statistical approach called patch occupancy. Efforts to deploy GPS collars got underway in Idaho last year. In Montana, we, too, will be taking advantage of public wolf reports and information gathered from hunters through FWP's annual hunter telephone harvest survey. Hunters are widespread in Montana, and their observations represent a potentially large sampling effort that can be used to estimate wolf pack abundance and distribution. FWP hopes to deploy 15 Global Positioning System collars in Montana wolf packs for this UM-led research effort. Lindsey Rich is working on her master's degree for the Montana portion of the project and another graduate student will join this Montana – Idaho effort late summer.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

A mortality signal from a collared wolf from the Sapphire pack was investigated. The collar had clearly been chewed off by other wolves.

Other

Wolf Litigation: On May 29th, Judge Malloy heard oral arguments in regards to a request for a preliminary injunction (would place the species back under federal regulations) while the main northern Rockies delisting litigation proceeds. As of Friday June 27, no ruling had been issued.

On June 12, the FWP Commission considered a proposal to establish a quota for a wolf season in the fall of 2008, pending a federal court ruling on a request for an preliminary injunction. The Commission approved a tentative wolf hunting quota of 75 wolves statewide and is requesting public comment. Last February, Commission had previously approved the structure of a wolf hunting season, including creation of three wolf management units. The proposed statewide quota would be as follows: 38 in Northern Montana's wolf management unit 1, with a subquota of two wolves in the North Fork Flathead Subunit; 22 wolves in Western Montana's wolf management unit 2; and 15 in Southwestern Montana's wolf management unit 3. . To comment, go to the FWP web site at fwp.mt.gov on the Hunting page and click on the red links. Comments may be mailed to: FWP-Wildlife Division, Attn: Public Comment, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT. 59620-0701. FWP is accepting public comment through July 18th.

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To learn more about Montana's recovered wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana / Columbus area at: 322-4303. Or call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.